SECTION 1: Summary

In 2011, Everybody Eats! started operations of the Farmer Cultivation Center, located at the Shepherd Valley Farm in Niwot Colorado. The FCC is a new farmer incubator with a mission to increase the number of small farmers growing food for local consumption in Boulder County. The goals for the first year were to start a new 3.5 acre farm, and relative to this specific grant:

- develop a process to recruit new students from diverse backgrounds
- create a two year, hands-on and classroom curriculum that integrates existing and new educational capacity
- establish a mentoring program that is reflective of the community and farming diversity of Boulder County

The 2011 year was a success by any measure, but there were significant challenges that influenced the tactical project plan. Starting and operating the farm, building a CSA, farm stand and wholesale business, fundraising, and organizational capacity building consumed 100% of our resources through the end of the growing season. Consequently, the curriculum and mentor program development efforts were delayed until October. Since then, it has been our focus to organize a project team, develop a course outline, contact potential instructors, and begin to piece the course schedule together.

As of the end of March 2012, there are three curriculum tracks completed and two still in development. We have a recruiting process in place and are poised to begin recruiting for the 2013 season. And finally, our new mentor strategy for the first four years of operation is in place.

The total project budget as of March 31, 2012 is $23,248. See Attachment A for a budget summary.
SECTION 2: Materials and Methods

Curriculum Development
Our process for creating a curriculum started with our interns from 2011. Having gone through the process of starting a new farm, we brainstormed a list of topics relevant to our recent learning experience. From there, we further refined the list by doing on-line research into other beginning farmer class materials, visited two similar programs in Washington State (see Attachment D) and finally engaged some local knowledgeable experts about additional topics. The curriculum includes 75 courses in tracks that include Horticulture, Operations, Business and Administration, Sales and Marketing, and a track called "The Centered Farmer". The curriculum is organized in a database that allows for organization of instructors, class schedules, and a detail printout for each class (see Attachment A). The full list of classes is included in Attachment C.

The majority of the grant budget was spent in this area as it requires the most work and utilizes the most resources from outside of our organization. Initial expenditures in the fall were used for project organization and research, followed by engagement with instructors who prepared their classes.

The most significant deviation from our original plan that was expressed in this original grant proposal is that it became clear to us that it would be necessary to have a professional farm manager/instructor/mentor on-site on a full time basis to work directly with students in the field and in the classroom. To this end, we hired Steve Cochenour, qualified as both a farm manager and an instructor. He spent the last several months preparing the curriculum elements under his responsibility, which primarily includes all of the horticulture topics, save a select few where we have guest experts teaching. Steve has already instructed on four different days and is doing a great job.

The output, materials and venue for each class varies with the method of presentation, so it is our plan to record every class and make the videos and presentation materials available on-line. This strategy compliments the vast amount of instructional material already on-line, from eOrganic webinars to You Tube videos. Using the supplies budget, we purchased a video camera, projector, and small laptop to facilitate video production and presentation. Our class videos will be uploaded to You Tube under the Everybody Eats name (see http://youtu.be/kg8Mx-4qzjc for an example).

We also started a library of reference books on topics ranging from business planning to soil biology and will teach extensively from those books. A bibliography is listed in Attachment B.

Finally, we are continually researching new teaching materials from other organizations, and the resource base continues to grow. There are several comprehensive sites such as Cornell's Northeast Beginning Farmers Program and eXtension.org's eOrganic Webinar series that we already have plans to use. Local resources like Colorado Building Farmers and Ag Big and Small will also play a role in our long term strategy.
Recruiting Methodology

Four interns were recruited to assist with the farm startup in 2011, with the understanding that they would continue with the program in 2012 as students. Our diversity goal was met with two men and two women, two Hispanics, a graduate student, and a former intern from another local farm. The intern mix represents a recruiting strategy that included word of mouth, website and social media presence, and outreach into low income communities via established social service organizations.

We established relationships with Boulder Circles, Community Food Share, Intercambio, and One Action One Boulder, all consistent with our mission to provide opportunities to socially disadvantaged communities. Since then, we also added a goal to engage veterans via the Boulder Vet Center and Workforce Boulder County vet specialists. This effort was inspired by our discover of the Farmer Veteran Coalition (http://www.farmvetco.org/) and our recognition that there was a good match between returning veterans and new farming opportunities. All of these outreach activities will require ongoing diligence on our part to maintain relationships and keep a presence within target communities.

Our experience with the 2011 interns was enlightening. We validated one concern that we had from the beginning: there would be a fairly high attrition rate in the program. In fact, one of the four interns quit mid-summer because of his workload with graduate school. One intern decided that commercial farming was too intense and decided to focus on hobby gardening and homesteading. She continues as a volunteer this year, but not as a student. Our last two interns, both Hispanic, decided that they could not afford to be students in the program without a stipend. Because we do not have funds for scholarships this year, we were unable to offer stipends, and they withdrew. This situation is especially informative because it was our assumption that a zero tuition program was incentive enough for aspiring farmers. However, the realities of subsidized child care and other low income issues presents a barrier that we need to continue to understand. While this is a setback in the short term, we will ultimately provide a better service by more fully understanding the needs of socially disadvantaged families.

The bottom line for the 2012 program is that we have four students, none of which are socially disadvantaged, but who nonetheless represent diversity in gender, age, professional background, and ability to contribute to the program.

Mentor Program

Our plans for developing a mentor program also did not follow the track we originally intended. With our desire to integrate existing resources and capacity into our program rather than compete, we pursued the Colorado Building Farmers program as a venue for introductory business classes as well as a platform for mentoring. We enrolled in the class in the fall of 2011 to evaluate the scope, and upon completion, applied for the mentor program. It came as a surprise that we were not accepted into the mentor program. Without enough mentors, they simply cannot accommodate every applicant. So, we have had to rethink our approach to mentoring. Our new solution is in harmony with our decision to hire a strong farm manager and instructor. In the next few years, we will have the capacity to mentor our students and graduates with internal resources, while at the same time developing a mentor capacity of recent graduates and eventually, more seasoned farmers willing to give of their time.
SECTION 3: Results

In our grant application, we defined the short term measure of success as:

- **Short Term:** In the first two years of this project, completing
  - curriculum syllabus and documented materials (written, videotaped, hands-on)
    - Result: The curriculum syllabus is about 60% complete in the first year of the program
  - establishment of relationships between BCFCC and local farmers and educators for education and mentoring
    - Result: We have made progress with several local farmers including Mark Guttridge, Rich Pecoraro, John Martin, Jim Barausky and they will all be teaching classes and/or hosting our students at their farms. Additionally, we have hired our own farm manager with a broad skill set for teaching and mentoring.
  - recruitment process including collaboration with local farms
    - Result: Our recruiting strategy focused more on local organizations and social networking than on local farms. This year, we will offer our classes to the interns of other farms to build this networking avenue.
  - mentoring program design
    - Our mentoring program will be based on internal capacity until we reach a critical mass of graduates willing and able to assume a mentor role.

Specific to the work plan listed in our grant application, our current status is listed below:

**Intern Recruiting Process Development:**
In order to engage a diverse group of interns each year, a recruiting process will be developed that is successful at reaching into socially and economically disadvantaged communities, and insures that high quality, motivated interns are selected. The high level tasks described below are integral to this success:

- **Build Relationships within SD Communities:** Betty Ball will lead the effort to reach into socially disadvantaged communities. The first phase of this effort will be to listen to the needs (relative to food and agriculture) of these communities and to understand motivating factors that would encourage community members to engage in local farming. The second phase will be to coordinate with existing advocacy and social organizations serving these communities to develop a recruiting strategy. Task schedule: Feb-Jun 2011
  **Status:** Ongoing first and second phase

- **Benchmarking of existing intern recruiting methods:** Tina Oster will lead the effort to research and benchmark existing recruiting methods for farm and educational internships, and to make recommendations of how to incorporate those methods into the BCFCC process. Task schedule: Feb-Jun 2011
  **Status:** Established relationship with Viva and Seattle Tilth in Washington state for further discussions.
• **Develop on-line presence:** Dave Georgis will lead the effort to establish a web site that compliments the recruiting strategy. Task schedule: May-Aug 2011
  **Status:** Initial site done, pending upgrade when funds permit

• **Interview/Screening process:** Juliette Wells will lead the effort to develop an interview and screening process that increases the likelihood of good matches between interns’ needs and program opportunities. Task schedule: Jun-Aug 2011
  **Status:** Done. See Attachment XX for application in English and Spanish

• **Outreach & Advertising:** Tina Oster will develop an outreach and advertising strategy based on the work described above. Task schedule: Jun-Sep 2011
  **Status:** Ongoing

**Curriculum Development:**
A key element of the Boulder County Farmer Cultivation Center is a documented curriculum that includes a broad variety of topics related to local farming. The first strategy is to invite existing educators and farmers to participate in both developing and teaching the curriculum. The second strategy is to find existing curricula that could be integrated into a local program.

• **Enlist educators/curriculum developers:** Dave Georgis will lead the effort to enlist local farmers and educators to participate in curriculum development. Task schedule: Feb-May 2011
  **Status:** Done for 2012 season. In process for curriculum year two.

• **Research existing curricula:** Dave Georgis will research existing curricula inside and outside of our community and determine what materials can be used here. Task schedule: Feb-Sep 2011
  **Status:** Done See Attachment D

• **Create Class Materials:** Dave Georgis will work with curriculum developers to create appropriate class materials that can include written hard copy, presentations, on-line resources, video and hands-on activities. All materials will be transferrable to other communities. Task schedule: Apr-Sep 2011
  **Status:** All materials will be available after the class has been presented.

• **Create hands-on learning experiences:** Juliette Wells will work with curriculum developers to create practical hands-on experiences in the farm setting. This element of the curriculum sets it apart from classroom-only education. Task schedule: Apr-Oct 2011
  **Status:** Done

• **Capture local generational & cultural knowledge:** Zia Parker will work within the local community to gather the rich knowledge of our generational farmers and cultural diversity. This heritage will be integrated into all aspects of the curriculum. Task schedule: Apr-Dec 2011
  **Status:** Not done due to loss of resource

• **Peer review of curriculum:** Rich Andrews will apply a peer review discipline to all curriculum materials to insure that information and
methodologies are technically relevant, up to date, and appropriate for our farming community. Task schedule: Sep-Dec 2011

**Status: Pending**

**Mentoring Program Development:**
To augment the BCFCC curriculum, the mentoring program pair interns with local farmers to form a culture of continuous learning within our food and farming community. Mentors will be sought, not only from the active farming community, but also from socially disadvantaged communities as a way to invigorate farming by and for those communities.

- **Benchmarking of other farmer mentoring programs:** Dave Georgis will research other mentoring programs to determine best practices. Task Schedule: Feb-Jul 2011
  **Status: Done. Adopting model of Breeze Farm in NC**
- **Mentor relationship building:** Juliette Wells will develop relationships within the farming and socially disadvantaged communities to gather information about how mentoring can positively affect them. Task Schedule: Apr-Sep 2011
  **Status: Not done**
- **Mentor payment/reciprocity policy:** Rich Andrews will determine how the BCFCC can provide value back to mentors. Task Schedule: May-Jul 2011
  **Status: Not applicable for current mentor strategy. Will be a future effort.**
- **Define mentor attributes & commitments:** Juliette Wells will work to define the attributes of a successful mentor and what commitments are required of them. Task Schedule: Jun-Aug 2011
  **Status: Not applicable for current mentor strategy. Will be a future effort.**
- **Recruit mentors:** Juliette Wells will lead the effort to recruit mentors for the next season of interns. Task Schedule: Jun-Sep 2011
  **Status: Not applicable for current mentor strategy. Will be a future effort.**

**SECTION 4: Conclusions and Discussion**

The Recruiting, Curriculum and Mentoring Program Development project for the Boulder County Farmer Cultivation Center is still in process and will continue beyond the end date of this grant. The objectives were achieved in that the program has been launched with four students in 2012 as a result of the grant project work. However, as stated above, the project is not completely finished and will therefore continue. A discussion of our goals over the next year is included below.

The most important learning to date includes:

- The program is best served by a combination of staff teaching/mentoring capacity and guest instructors/instructors
- Our target demographic of socially disadvantaged people have personal needs beyond free tuition. Those needs must be addressed to enable their participation
- Local farmers are more often than not stretched to their limit and find it difficult to contribute to this program, even if they agree with the vision
- Utilizing the mentoring program in the Colorado Beginning Farmers class may not be a good fit for this program
- Veterans present a desirable opportunity for outreach and recruiting
- Managing the individual needs of students will be a primary challenge into the future
- Addressing the physical, psychological and emotional challenges of farming is a fundamental need in the program

Program development work will continue through the end of 2013 when our first class of students complete the program. Beyond that, there will be continual refinement and expansion of the program along with increasing organizational capacity to support the growing program.

Curriculum Development
During the remainder of 2012, we will complete the entire curriculum plan and enlist instructors, especially for the Business and Administration track, the primary focus of classroom work and mentoring in the second year of the program (i.e. 2013 for our current class).
Additionally, the first year curriculum will be compiled for distribution including videos, course materials, suggested reading and resource links.
Finally, we recognize that there will be some advantage to establishing some sort of accreditation for the program so that it is recognized in various job training and educational credit programs. We will work to establish a path towards accreditation for at least one target in 2013.

Recruiting
Recruiting efforts have already begun for the 2013 class and will include, in addition to focus on socially disadvantaged/limited resource communities, outreach to Veterans. Our experience so far in 2012 is that word of mouth and social networking are both reaching an audience of potential students who represent a more mainstream population. Therefore, the majority of recruiting efforts will go towards finding qualified limited resource and Veteran participants. Based on our experience with our 2011 interns, an important part of recruiting will be to understand the motivations that will compel limited resource people to commit to a two year training program to become farmers, and to better understand the barriers that prevent them from being able to join the Farmer Cultivation Center.
We will work closely with local social service agencies to develop a support structure for limited resource students, and learn how to manage cross cultural norms and behaviors. Our goal for the 2013 incoming class is for a total of 8 students with 4 of those coming from the limited resource and veteran demographics. As an aside, we are not overlooking gender as a recruiting issue, but so far, our experience is that there is a good balance of interest for both men and women.
Mentoring
Our work with building a self sustaining mentoring program will focus on creating mentor resources from within the program while efficiently using a limited mentor base from outside the program. For the foreseeable future, we feel it is within our capacity to utilize our Farm Manager as the mentor for at least the first graduating class. As the program builds a reputation and loyalty within the community, we will better understand the total mentoring capacity within the local farming community. One possible scenario is that we establish a list of "go to" experts on a variety of topics and call on them only when necessary to solve specific problems.

Organization Capacity
As we progress through our first season of instruction, we are becoming able to define the resource requirements to run the program on an ongoing basis. Our budget projections for the next several years include the addition of resources and a financial plan to support the addition of salaried personnel and instructor expenses. Furthermore, our infrastructure capacity will also need to increase to support larger student body sizes. We will double the size of our cultivated area going into 2013 and make certain we have the facilities for both first and second year student classes and hands-on learning.

SECTION 5: Outreach

The curriculum content developed in this grant and beyond will be available via a variety of media appropriate for the content. Additionally, the program development methodology will be made available via consultation upon request. We have opened individual classes to the public for a walk in fee. These classes are publicized via social media and websites as well as the list serves of other supportive organizations.

Finally, we learned through our research of other incubator programs across the country that many people are working on similar issues and there is a need for more collaboration. We have concluded that a national gathering would be an efficient way for many incubators to network and collaborate. We will begin discussions with other organizations about such an event and will offer to host if Colorado is an attractive venue for such a gathering.
SECTION 5: Final Budget Sheet

The final budget is shown below. We did not spend as much money as we projected in the grant request because the project is not fully complete. A detailed breakdown of expenses is available upon request in Excel format.

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Final Project Budget
**ATTACHMENT A**

**BOULDER COUNTY FARMER CULTIVATION CENTER**
**COURSE DETAIL**

**COURSE NAME** Soil Analysis
**TRACK** Horticulture
**COORDINATOR** Georgis
**INSTRUCTOR** Cochenour

**COURSE SUMMARY:**
Soil Testing and Analysis Described

**COURSE OUTLINE:**

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ATTACHMENT D

Review of Farmer Training Programs
Prepared by Maeve Phelan and Juliette Wells

Goal:
Gather information on existing farmer training and incubator programs that the FCC can learn from and determine which program to visit.

Process: We began this process by developing a list of questions that would help us better understand how different farm training programs structured themselves and what they offer to a participant in terms of hands-on training and business planning. We searched possible farmer training-incubator programs through various websites such as Attra, SARE and Beginning Farmers, these sites provided links to various programs across the United States. We were surprised to find so many programs that have only been in operation for 1-3 years and to find that many of them have a similar mission and model as what we are trying to do here in Boulder County.

Many programs are connected through a university or community college and C.R.A.F.T (Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training). Some program are community supported while others are completely independent.

Resources:
http://www.craftfarmers.org/
https://attra.ncat.org/
http://www.futureharvestcasa.org/
http://www.groundswellcenter.org/
http://www.beginningfarmers.org/
http://www.sare.org/Learning-Center

After reviewing over 15 programs and narrowing this down to 7 that are enclosed in this report. There were several that strongly coincide with our program: Alba, Viva, and Seattle Tilth. After phone conversations with each of these it was evident that Viva Farm in Skagit Valley Washington and Seattle Tilth in Seattle were the highest priority. Both programs closely model what we are trying to achieve here in Boulder County and are not much older than we are, therefore it made sense to benchmark our program against a similar young programs.

Questions:

- Location
- Development and history of the farm training program
- Describe the mission and vision of the program
- What is the focus of the educational component, what does that look like, what do you cover and how long does it last?
- Farm management & production – How is this handled and by whom?
What is the cost for training?
How is your program financed?
Would you say your program is sustainable? What involvement is there from the community?
Who are you marketing to and what kind of enrollment number are you looking for?
What methods do you use for community outreach?

BREEZE FARM
Hillsboro, NC
WC Breeze Family Farm Agricultural Extension & Research Center in Hurdle Mills at 4909 Walnut Grove Church Road.

http://www.orangecountyfarms.org/PLANTatBreeze.asp

- Take an 8-week course, once-a-week, 6 – 9 pm for $110. In classroom, no hands-on. Course taught Jan-Feb.
- Managed by Coop Extension. Farmers present at class.
- An average of 50 participants per course. Anyone can take class. No application.
- Participants may apply to lease land at the Breeze Farm Incubator.
- Must write business plan before signing lease.
- Incubator participants start with ¼ acre and can increase to ½ of an acre. Land comes prepared with raised beds and irrigation. Lease is $150 per year.
- May lease land for a maximum of two years.
- Farm mentor spends two afternoons per week at the farm. Mentor is local farmer. Paid $5,000 to prepare land in early Spring and $5,000 to act as mentor for a total of $10,000.
- CEFS offers help finding land to lease to people who want to continue farming.

Class participants are:
- Just out of college
- In career transition
- Retirees – from IBM, other high tech industries (lots of tech in this part of NC)
- People who own land they want to farm (about 20% of each class)

Of the 50 people in the class, 12 go on to lease land (maximum able to accommodate on Breeze farm). Of these, 90% continue farming in 'one way or another.' Some are full-time farmers, part time farmers, or grow for their families.
Ownership/Management
- Land donated to NC State University College of Ag and Life Science.
- Program managed by Coop Extension, which is funded in part by NCSU.
- Funding comes from class fees, land leases, and Extension general funds.

Contact
Carl Matyac
Orange County Coop Extension Director
919.245.2051
Carl_matyac@ncsu.edu

Visit
Dr. Matyac is out sick. My perception from talking with him is that he would welcome a visit.

Maverick Farm
Valle Crucis, NC
http://maverickfarms.org/about.html

Mission
Maverick Farms is an educational non-profit dedicated to promoting family farming as a community resource and reconnecting local food networks in High Country of North Carolina.

Program
- The Farm Incubator and Grower Project (FIG) is new this year – January, 2012.
- The program is for two years.
- The plan is to ‘incubate’ two farmers each year. The first confirmed participant is a graduate of Appalachian State University and has two years farming experience. She will be employed as the Farm Manager for Maverick Farm.
- While this is the first year for a training program, Maverick Farm has had a CSA since 2005.
- The FIG vision includes providing:
  - Low-cost land leases for new farmers engaged in vegetable, cut flower, herb, and pasture-based animal farming
  - A shared equipment pool and mentorship opportunities
  - Year-round educational programming beginning farmers that will be available to the public

Incubator Program
"The Farm Incubator and Grower (FIG) Program provides leasable land for vegetable, cut flower, herb, and pasture-based animal farm ventures as well as equipment rentals and mentorship opportunities for beginning farmers. FIG has land available in .25-.2 acre plots in Valle Crucis. In the graduated system of support, FIG will offer less land and more support in the first year for FIG farmers, and more land and less support (as needed) as farmers establish themselves. Additionally, we will work with FIG farmers to find long-term, low-cost land agreements suitable to their farming needs.
If you are interested in the FIG program and are ready to start a new farm enterprise, check out the following information and application materials."

Maverick Farms is developing the FIG program to offer leased land and share equipment to new farmers at affordable rental rates. There are local and region
markets for produce and other farm fresh foods waiting for the new farmer, including the multi-farm High Country CSA which Maverick Farms developed in 2009 precisely for the purpose of providing the security of a CSA market for new growers. FIG can help farmers start their business without a large up-front capital investment or land ownership.

Participants
One participant signed up.

Ownership/Management
- The land is owned by Valle Crucis Conference Center.
- Maverick Farm is operating on land previously leased by Appalachian State University's Sustainable Development Program. No formal partnership with ASU is mentioned.
- FIG is managed by the non-profit Maverick Farm.

Contact
Tom Philpott, Co-Founder and Co-Director, full-time farmer at Maverick Farms. Tom also the food editor for Seattle-based Grist.org, and writes the nation’s only weekly column on food politics.
tom@maverickfarms.org
(828) 963-4656

Visit
This training program does not yet exist; no one has been trained. Many of FIG's stated goals are similar to those of the FCC. This would be a good group to talk to in a year.

NC New Farmers
Five locations to be announced within the next two weeks.
http://www.cefs.ncsu.edu/whatwedo/foodsystems/beginningfarmers.html
www.NCNewFarmers.org

Program
- CEFS/NC New Farmers received a grant from the Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Program (USDA) to establish five new farm incubator programs.
- Nine applications were received. Five will be selected. Requirements include public land committed to the project, a sponsoring organization, and community support.
- They received applications from a number of non-profits and coop extension.
- The grant is for two years. They are 7 months in.
- The person managing the process, Joanna Lelekacs, will meet with each sponsoring organization and community supporters to design each individual program to meet the needs stated by each community. A professional facilitator has been hired to assist with a charrette process in each community.
(For a definition see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charrette.)

Incubator
"Access to land has been identified as one of the top challenges facing new farmers in North Carolina. This Incubator Farm Project will work with communities to address this need by assisting them with repurposing public land into places that incubate new farmers. These new farmers get access to land, in exchange for "rent" in the form of fresh farm products or other services donated to communities in need -- a win-win-win opportunity for everyone involved.

What is an incubator farm? Typically it is one or more parcels of land where
one or multiple producers are farming and marketing farm products through their own new farm business enterprise, often with organizational access to training / technical assistance opportunities on farm business and production practices."

CEFS used an application process to solicit community interest in partnering on the **Incubator Farm Project**. Applications were received through December 1, 2011. Applications are currently under review with anticipation of final selection of project partners in early 2012

- **Participants**
  - Not yet defined.

- **Ownership/Management**
  - Land will be made available by each sponsoring community.
  - Each incubator will be managed by the sponsoring organization.

- **Contact**
  Joanna Lelekacs  
  Joanna_lelekacs@ncsu.edu  
  919.244.5269

- **Visit**
  Joanna Lelekacs suggested that a visit would make more sense a year from now - after the incubator farms have been established. She is happy to talk by phone now, or any time.

She directed me to resources listed under [http://www.cefs.ncsu.edu/whatwedo/foodsyste/m/beginningfarmers.html](http://www.cefs.ncsu.edu/whatwedo/foodsyste/m/beginningfarmers.html).

**Greenbank Farm**

Greenbank Farm  
765 Wonn Road #A201  
Greenbank, WA 98253  
360.678.7700 (phone)  
[www.greenbankfarm.biz](http://www.greenbankfarm.biz)

- **Vision**
  "We are building programs that teach by example that:
  
  - environmental stewardship is a necessary part of sustainable agriculture and commerce
  - agriculture is a necessary part of a healthy economy
  - nutritious food is a necessary part of a healthy life, made healthier by outdoor recreation and that community is what keeps it all in balance.

  **GREENBANK FARM**

  **Program**
  
  This full-time, 7-month long experiential program is for aspiring farmer
seeking to learn and practice the technical and business skills needed to run a small-scale organic farm.

- Through cooperatively managing the Center’s ten-acre farm and attending weekly lectures, discussions and demonstrations on topics including organic crop production, soil science, business planning, and direct marketing, participants will acquire a thorough education in organic small farm management.
- Participants also engage in independent studies including monthly box reports, a research project and the creation of a personal business plan.
- Bi-weekly field trips to regional farms allow participants to see a variety of farming styles and talk to experienced producers.
- Through management of the GFATC Farm, participants develop their practical farm skills including planning, tillage, greenhouse propagation, weeding, harvesting, marketing, record keeping and more.
- Students also learn to build a greenhouse, operate tractors, make compost and manage the farm’s poultry and bees. With the skills and knowledge gained and a business plan in hand, program graduates are ready to start or manage their own small organic farm.
- For 10 hours each week, participants take part in classes and discussion on the production, business, ecological and social concepts that lie behind the practical work.

**Cost**
The program fee is $5,200. On-site housing, double occupancy, is available for $180/mo.

**Participants**
- Most come from out-of-state and are in their 20’s.
- Greenbank Farm is a community-founded nonprofit organization which manages 151 acres of publicly owned space and an historic farm, located at the center of Whidbey Island.
- The land is owned by the Port of Coupeville.
- The program is managed by the non-profit Greenbank Farm.

**Visit**
This is an expensive training program. I do not think it meets FCC criteria for a visit.

**Mission**
"Our mission is to advance economic viability, social equity and ecological land management among limited-resource and aspiring farmers. We work to create opportunities for family farms while providing education and demonstration on conservation, habitat restoration, marketing and whole farm planning."

**Program**
- Take a six-month Farmer Education Program (PEPA) course for a total of 195 hours, once-a-week, 6 – 9 pm in the classroom, Sunday 4 hours/field work.
- All participants are working full-time.
- After completing PEPA and a business plan, participants are eligible to lease land. Currently, ALBA has about 30 people who rent land. They a
7 to 8 people per year.

- Participants are able to lease land for a maximum of 6 years.
- ALBA is having difficulty 'moving people off the land' onto their own land because:
  - ALBA incubator farmers are comfortable where they are
  - Most land in the Salinas Valley is in large tracts; owners do not want to sublease to a number of farmers
- The ALBA program is in transition. They received feedback from participants that going from PEPA to farming on one's own was too big a jump. This year, ALBA will be introducing an 'intermediate step.'
- I was referred to Nathan, the Farm Manager, for more information.

### Cost

- Sliding Scale

### Participants

- Range of people take the PEPA course, including students at Hartnell College, an ag school that does not have an organic farming program. These students are able to take parts of the PEPA course, or modules, and receive academic credit.
- Incubator participants are primarily young people new to farming and people experienced with farm work. The later tend to be more successful.

### Ownership/Management

- Land is owned by ALBA.
- The program is managed by ALBA.

### Contact

I spoke to:

Patty Howe, Administrative Director

[patty@ALBAFarmers.org](mailto:patty@ALBAFarmers.org)

(831) 758-1469

Patty referred me to the Farm Manager for questions regarding changes to the ALB program:

Nathan Harkleroad, Farm Incubator Program Manager

[Nathan@ALBAFarmers.org](mailto:Nathan@ALBAFarmers.org)

(831) 758-1469

Visit

Patty Howe directed me to Gary Peterson, the Communications and Development Director, regarding the possibility of a visit and/or consulting services. He will be back in the office on Monday, February 6.

[Gary@ALBAFarmers.org](mailto:Gary@ALBAFarmers.org)

(831) 758-1469. After talking with Director Gary Peterson it did not make sense for us to visit ALBA. Many of the concepts and educational components are similar to what we are trying to do but their model is strictly economic.
**Bench Mark Program # 1**

**Viva Farms**
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
http://www.vivafarms.org
Director: Sarita Schaffer
Sarita@growfood.org

**Program**
- 12-week course, once-a-week, 6 – 9 pm for $250. Per family. In classroom, no hands-on.
  - Course taught Jan-March.
- Topics include Small Farm Licensing and Permitting, Marketing Analysis & Consumer Trends, Marketing, Branding, & Communication, Operations, Personal Planning, Accounting and Bookkeeping, Finances & Taxes, Insurance.
- Managed by Coop Extension. Farmers present at class.
- An average of 10 participants per course. Anyone can take class. Must complete class in order to apply for lease.
- Lease is $400 per year that includes irrigation, metered.
- Must submit a business plan with application.
- Viva Farm participants can lease up to 6 acres for a maximum of three years.
- Equipment Rental is available for $50.00 per day. Tractor with implements such as a rototiller and seeder.
- Access to 1,500 sq ft hoop house and 600 sq ft heated germination room at a rate of $5.00 per table per week.
- Viva provides a food processing station with an additional 420 sq ft of cold storage. Once the application has been approved and the participate signs a lease they are on their own and have to make all their own decisions, devise their own production plan and do any additional build out. The participants do not interact with each other, other than coordinate use of equipment.
- CEFS offers help finding land to lease to people who want to continue farming.

**Participants**
Class participants are:
- Migrant Workers
- Those in a career transition
- Previous interns at other farms
- Couples who want to farm but have never produced food before on their own

**History:**
The Viva Farm Program was launched in 2009 to provide new farmers with access to affordable access to education, training, and technical assistance; capital and credit; land and markets.

**Land Management**
- 33 acres of land has been leased from the Port of Skagit.
- Agriculture and entrepreneurial support from WSU Extension.

**Contact**
Sarita Schaffer-Director
Viva Farms
360-707-3223
sarita@vivafarms.org
VIVA FARM Visit March 7, 2012
Arranged a visit with Viva Farm through numerous conversations with Sarita Schaffer
Steve Cochenour and I (Juliette Wells) visited Viva farm on March 7, 2012 on Wednesday
morning beginning at 10:00. Farm is located in the Skagit Valley in Washington State, 60
miles North of Seattle. Viva farm is situated on 33 acres of fertile farm land located off a
very busy highway and near the Skagit airport. We arrived at Viva Farm on a sunny
morning in Skagit WA. We were joined by three other visitors from the region who were
interested in the Viva Program. Sarita Schaffer, the director of the program and newly
hired farm manager were available for tour and conversation. The location is great except
the rainy weather. They have problems with fungus and air borne pathogens. The farm
manager mentions that it is one of the biggest problems for growers in that region are
keeping the plants healthy.
As we walked the land, Sarita talked about the history of the program, the farmer incubator
structure, and the support that the participants receive while in the program. We were able
to see the farming landscape, the processing station, the hoop house and the warm room
for germination. This was very helpful to see how things were set up and how the
participants were utilizing the resources available to them. There was a lot going on that
morning. Some were building additional tables for the hoop house while others were
working on shelving and a new green house that was going up. Sarita talked about the
funding they had received from a private donor in the amount of $250,000., of which
helped to buy a cold storage unit and build the outdoor processing station with two
separate wash stations, shelves, stainless tables, and storage boxes.
Viva farm recently went into partnership with Growing Washington a farm cooperative that
unites farmers across the state to provide the largest range of food possible to CSA
members.
One unique aspect to the Viva Farm operation is the location. To capitalize on the location
they created a gazebo type market stand structure at one corner of their 33 acres, adjacent
to a very busy intersection, where an average of 24,000 motorists travel to and from
Anacortes Island and other Puget Sound destinations during the summer months. This
Market stand averaged $2,000 a day in revenues and much of the produce that is sold
came from the Viva growers. They also purchased large amount of fresh local fruit and
produce from other farms. Viva Farms offers the opportunity to sell their produce at
wholesale prices, it is convenient and they do not have to market themselves. As another
training element, the market stand takes labor and cashiering, so several of the Viva Farm
trainees also worked at the farm stand for additional income.
After the tour we talked with the several Viva Farm incubators participants including Lisette
Flores part of a mother-daughter team and Jenny Gerfen and Alex Smith a couple team.
Lisetta who has been in the program for over two years is the daughter of Nelida Martinez.
They are market producers and primarily focus of herbs and vegetable. Nelida worked in
the fields all over Washington and California and when her son got sick she could no
longer afford to work in the field and decided to apply for the Viva program. One feature
that was again unique to Viva is the “pay for service” model. These services include the 4
x 8 grow tables in the hoop house and the warm germination room. The charge for rental
is $5.00 per week. Very reasonable rate with includes access to water and electricity.
Talking with Jenny and Alex, first year in the program, I sensed that they were
overwhelmed with all that they were trying to do to prepare for market in May. Their
greatest frustration and challenge has been from having to figure things out for them-
selves as they proceed.
Not having that much direct experience with growing or infrastructure such as constructing a greenhouse or managing a production plan they felt a lack of support and were concerned about making unnecessary mistakes. Jenny and Alex are doing the build out of a greenhouse without help and expressed disappointment for lack of support to assist them in further hands-on farm training. Another thing that Jenny and Alex mentioned pertained to lack of adequate equipment. The tractor that is available through Viva is a large tractor, much too big to manage on a one acre plot and not having an alternative to other equipment has proven to be challenge. A hand operated push tiller would be a welcomed addition.

I reflected about how we are hoping to operate our program, in contrast to Viva, and realized that we are assuming that we will be more engaged in helping our trainees in the first several years of their farm. I wonder if this is a correct assumption. Interdependence rather than independence is primary to really helping new farmers get on their feet. Viva offers a 12 week class but no hands on training and this seemed to be a missing link. Of course, I was impressed with the partnerships they have secured and the relationship with Washington State University.

Overall, Steve and I were impressed with the overall goals and objectives of the program. The market relationships and the market stand were very ambitious and helpful to participants so they do not have to focus on marketing until they are ready to launch out on their own.

Viva Farms helps new farmers get started. Our Farm Incubator provides:
- Land, equipment and infrastructure
- Education, training and technical assistance (bilingual- Eng/Esp)
- Marketing and distribution support
- Start-up loans

Viva in 5 minutes: Watch our Social Innovation Fast Pitch Video

Viva Farms is a joint venture of WSU Extension & GrowFood.org, an international non-profit dedicated to recruiting, training and capitalizing the next generation of sustainable farmers.

Why Viva Farms was Launched
Land in the Skagit Valley is rated among the top 2% in the world for agricultural use. Each acre, wisely farmed, can feed as many as a hundred people. Yet only 108,500 of the county’s 1.1 million total acres are farmed today, by an aging population of farmers. (The average age of farmers is 57 years). Skagit’s exceptional farmland faces such intense development pressure that the American Farmland Trust designated the region the fifth most threatened agricultural region in the nation.

As the region’s farms and farmers vanish, the demand for fresh, local food continues to grow. Over the past ten years, the number of farmers’ markets in WA has nearly doubled. Total sales at WA farmers’ markets reached $55 million in 2007, a 45% increase from 2006. More than 70 farms in WA now offer Community Supported Agriculture programs (CSAs) wherein customers pay upfront to receive weekly produce boxes throughout the season. The local/sustainable food movement is not just gaining momentum in the Puget...
Sound, but throughout the state, country and world. Local food sales in the US are predicted to reach $7 billion by 2011, up from $4 billion in 2002. Eager to meet this growing demand for good, local food is a new variety of farmers. Some are the children of the old farmers who are returning to the family farm with new ideas about production, distribution, and the principles of farming. But the vast majority of new farmers are immigrants with extensive agricultural experience and young people from non-farming backgrounds who are pursuing farm careers as a means to embody their social/cultural, environmental and economic values.

Project History

The Viva Farms Incubator Program was launched in June 2009 to provide new farmers affordable access to education, training and technical assistance; capital and credit; land and markets. The first development phase of the incubator is well underway. Thirty students, approximately half of whom are Latino, completed Skagit County's first bilingual “Sustainable Small Farming and Ranching” course and thirty-six students completed the first bilingual “Agricultural Entrepreneurship and Farm Business Planning” course. The Port of Skagit has leased Viva Farms 33 acres for an incubator farm where course graduates may sublease plots on which to launch and grow their farm businesses. Access to shared infrastructure, equipment and low-interest “educational loans” minimizes participants’ start-up costs, while agricultural and entrepreneurial support from peers, [WSU Extension](https://www.wsu.edu) personnel and Viva Farms staff increases the likelihood of early-stage success. Core areas of support include organic production practices, marketing, sales, distribution, record keeping and liability management.

The farm incubator is not an end point for farmers. It is a starting point to transition them to farm ownership and secure long-term tenure. Once farmers establish stable agricultural enterprises at the incubator, Viva Farms will help them relocate to new land and continue growing their operations. They will need capital to acquire land, equipment, seeds, livestock and other farm inputs. The goal of the loan fund is to provide affordable start-up and growth capital to new farmers.
VIVA Application

**Start-Up Farmer Proposal**

Please submit your proposal for feedback and comments via e-mail to info@vivafarms.org with Start-Up Farmer Ap in the subject line or mail to: Viva Farms, PO Box 1714, Mount Vernon, WA 98273

*Please add lines (electronically) or additional paper (for written submissions), as required to complete this form.*

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**Part I - Enterprise Information**

Please describe in as much detail and depth as possible the idea/concept behind your farming enterprise.
PART III – MACHINERY & LABOR REQUIREMENTS

Resource requirements:

a) What land requirements are needed to execute your project? Please provide an area range in square feet or acres. Start-up farms start at 1 acre.

For all of the following please indicate which resources need to be supplied by Viva Farms and which you intend to provide yourself.

b) What infrastructure requirements are needed to execute your project (i.e. greenhouse, barns, storage, water reservoir, solar panels)?

c) What equipment requirements are needed to execute your project (i.e. tractors, planters, irrigation equipment)?

d) What water requirements are needed to execute your project (i.e. frequency of supply, approximate volume during dry spells)?

List expected annual inputs required to execute your project (i.e. seed, compost, soil amendments, plastic, pots, etc.). Labor requirements:

a) How much time do you anticipate you will spend on:
   i. Planting
   ii. Weeding
   iii. Harvesting

b) Outline your labor strategy by indicating who and how many people will perform the requisite tasks related to your enterprise.

c) What are your expected weekly time requirements to perform the requisite tasks related to your enterprise? Specify time, per week, for each person.

d) How many hours per week will you need to commit to other responsibilities away from your enterprise (e.g. employment, family). How will you manage the time requirements of your farming enterprise with your other responsibilities?

In as much detail as possible, please outline your labor strategy the table below. List the activities that will take place over the growing season; who will perform those activities and how many hours each person will spend on those activities. Expand the table as necessary or submit on a separate page.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONTH</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>HOURS</th>
<th>PERSONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ex) June | Ex) Planting  
|       | Ex) Weeding (1/4 acre planted garden)          | Ex) 2 day (16 hours)  
|       |                                               | 2 day (16 hours)  
|       |                                               | Ex) 1/2 day, once a week (4 h/week)  
|       |                                               | 1 day per week (8 h/week)                 | Self 15 hours  
|       |                                               | Spouse 10 hours                          | Spouse 10 hours  
|       |                                               | Volunteers 4 hours                      | Volunteers 4 hours  
|       |                                               | Paid workers 2 hours                | Paid workers 2 hours  
| March |                                               |                                             |                              |
| April |                                               |                                             |                              |
| May   |                                               |                                             |                              |
| June  |                                               |                                             |                              |
| July  |                                               |                                             |                              |
| August|                                               |                                             |                              |
| September |                                           |                                             |                              |
| October |                                             |                                             |                              |
| November |                                             |                                             |                              |
As a means of outlining your crop plans, please fill in the following table in as much detail as possible. Expand the table as necessary or submit on a separate page.

(Please plan based on one acre which will be .70 cultivated and .30 cover cropped)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CROP</th>
<th>DAYS TO MATURITY</th>
<th>PLANNED GARDEN SOWING DATE</th>
<th># OF BEDS or ln Sq ft</th>
<th>APPROXIMATE HARVEST DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex) Carrots</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>May 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2 beds</td>
<td>Aug 30&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>May 21&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2 beds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is your cover crop plan?

**PART V – MARKETING STRATEGY** Marketing:

a) Have you tested marketed your produce? If yes, please provide details in terms of the feedback you received and the lessons you have learned.

b) Outline your marketing plan?

c) Why did you choose this plan?

d) How do you plan on advertising your produce (i.e. flyers, website, word-of-mouth)?

e) What marketing strategies have you used previously? Where they successful? How do you plan building upon your former marketing strategies?

**PART VI – SKILLS BUILDING** List workshops, courses, seminars etc. that you have attended in the past two years that have helped your farming business. Please identify certifications completed and planned as well as any relevant associations joined.

Have you thought about certifying your farm organic? If yes, what type of research have you done? If not, why not? Have you come to a decision in terms of certifying your farm?
How might your business plan incorporate collaborative elements (i.e. work and share resources with other Viva Farms participants)?

**PART VII – FINANCIAL DETAILS**

Revenues:

a) Estimated annual gross product yields (per product):

b) Estimated annual gross income from produce sales ($):

Please outline your financing strategy:

Estimated Annual Expenses ($):

List the anticipated project expenses (i.e. inputs, capital costs, marketing, certifications).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense(s)</th>
<th>Amount ($)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>$</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>$</td>
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</table>

Estimated annual net income:

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*The Christian Science Monitor*

**Change Agent**

By Whitney Eulich, Correspondent / December 15, 2011

**Viva Farms grows a new generation of farmers**

Through Viva Farms, Sarita and Ethan Schaffer introduce newcomers to farming and teach sustainable techniques as an alternative to 'factory farms.'

Dressed in a bright orange shirt and khaki pants, Ethan Schaffer stands in front of a captive audience at the Social Innovation Fast Pitch taking place in Seattle in early October.
“Who will grow your food?” Mr. Schaffer asks the audience, who votes to award a cash grant to the best idea and presentation at the fast pitch event. “These guys?” he probe, pointing to a large photo of an elderly couple holding a pitchfork, reminiscent of the classic painting “American Gothic.” “The average age of a farmer in the United States ... is 57 years old; 70 percent of farmland is owned by farmers who will retire in the next 20 years,” he says.

These statistics concern Mr. Schaffer, and his wife Sarita Schaffer. The young couple has been working in the organic food movement since they helped found growfood.org, a website aimed at connecting people with farms, in 2001 at the age of 19. Their presentation at the Social Innovation Fast Pitch was for a new project called Viva Farms, which won two audience choice awards and the first prize nonprofit award that day.

IN PICTURES: Benign Design: An Exhibition of Sustainable Problem-Solving

Viva Farms offers bilingual education on farming and farm management in partnership with Washington State University Extension and growfood.org, and runs a local farm “incubator” for start-up farmers, offering them land, equipment, and other help. The goal is to train the next generation of American farmers and contribute to a sustainable food system.

“Historically land has been passed down from generation to generation within a family,” Mrs. Schaffer says in a telephone interview. “But with new access to education, farmers’ kids now have an opportunity to choose nonfarming professions, which is great. But also means the number of young people pursuing farming has decreased by 37 percent since 1989.”

Viva Farms tries to help new farmers overcome the many technical and financial barriers they face.

“There are five things every start-up farmer needs,” Mrs. Schaffer says. These include education in farm management, access to land, equipment (like tractors) and infrastructure (like irrigation and cold storage), start-up capital, and marketing and distribution support.

“On the one hand, the culture of farming is disappearing. But on the other hand, it is being totally reinvented,” Mrs. Schaffer says. “Everyone has a different perspective on how food should be produced. They’re even using Facebook to sell products,” she says.

Many new farmers come from nonfarm families, which means they may lack the first-hand knowledge of what it takes to be a farmer. Others have been farming their entire lives on other people’s land and are looking to learn the managerial skills needed to start their own operations.

Skagit Valley, just 60 miles north of Seattle, has some of the richest farmland in the country. Viva Farms leases a 33-acre stretch of land there and sub-leases one-to-three-acre plots to start-up farmers. It also provides access to tractors and rotor tillers, marketing channels to help them sell their crops, and irrigation so that the farmers don’t have to dig wells.

Viva Farms offers its help below market cost, but it’s not free. “We’re giving them a leg up,” Mrs. Schaffer says. “but we’re not setting up unrealistic expectations in terms of the cost of doing business in farming.”

“It’s like the United Nations,” says Mr. Schaffer of the headphones students wear in class to accommodate the simultaneous translation. “We think it’s important to help build community between the English- and Spanish-speaking farmers. Latino farm workers are so vital to our farm system,” he says.

The mix of cultures is even more exciting once students graduate and lease plots on the farm, Mrs. Schaffer says. “Latinos are introducing how to use things we see as invasive weeds as something to be eaten.
"We’re all looking at food and farming through a different lens," she says. "The incubator is about sharing tools, discoveries, and tips."

Both Mr. and Mrs. Schaffer come from nonagricultural families in Icaho, but became interested in farming for social and environmental reasons. Mr. Schaffer was diagnosed with cancer when he was 16, and believes the way his food was grown played a role in his illness. After he went into remission, the couple traveled to New Zealand where they fully immersed themselves in working on farms.

"It was such hard work," Mr. Schaffer says. "But at the same time it was really rewarding. Wheelbarrows full of manure and compost, working all day long and just feeling exhausted and satisfied by the end of the day."

Without efforts such as Viva Farms, big agriculture will just get bigger, Mr. Schaffer says. Even "old-time" farmers who don’t practice organic methods still understand important principles like maintaining soil quality and being good stewards of the land. But the farm landscape has changed in recent years with big companies and hedge funds buying up farmland for real estate development and so-called factory farming.

"Food prices are going up, and the focus is on short-term yield by dumping pesticides," Mr. Schaffer says.

Nelida Martínez and her daughter, Lisette Flores, lease a plot of land from Viva Farms. Before taking her first class in 2009, Mrs. Martínez was an avid gardener living in a farm-worker housing development. She was selling food from her community garden to help pay her son’s medical bills, while her daughter, Ms. Flores, was working at a fast-food restaurant.

Joining her mother at Viva Farms was the first time Ms. Flores had ever farmed. "My favorite part is seeding and transferring the seeds to soil," Ms. Flores says. "I get to see it grow from a little tiny seed to full plants.” She also discovered vegetables she had never tried before, like broccoli.

If she and her mother hadn’t learned about Viva Farms, Flores says, she would probably still be working at a fast-food restaurant. "It’s really hard to start farming," she says. "Viva Farms is giving us a real chance to start a difficult business without quitting in discouragement."

"Pure Nelida," the name of their farm on a Viva Farms plot, just broke even this year. Now the mother-daughter team has expanded and leased a bit more land. They are growing cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, carrot, radishes, and tomatoes.

"Our dream is to buy a farm," Flores says. "But right now Viva gives us a place to sell our crops, which is key," she says, referring to the roadside farmstand.

"We’re not just cultivating food, but the next generation of farmers," Mrs. Schaffer says. One hundred percent of profits go back into education, training, and equipment, she says. "This program is definitely replicable. It could work every place people are eating.”
Bench Mark Program #2

Offices:
Seattle, WA

Farm: Auburn, WA (45 minutes South of Seattle)
17601 SE Lake Moneysmith Rd., Auburn, WA 98092
http://seattletilth.org/about/seattletilthfarmworks

Program

Seattle Tilth Farm Works participants attend farm and business trainings, tour neighboring farm operations, and gain hands-on experience growing and harvesting food using organic practices.

Mission

Seattle Tilth inspires and educates people to grow food organically, conserve natural resources and support local food systems in order to cultivate a healthy urban environment and community.

Participants

Refugee’s, migrant workers, and low income residents of King County

Program

Seattle Tilth provides farm business training and support to immigrants, refugees and people with limited financial resources in South King County. This “farm incubator” program is known as Seattle Tilth Farm Works (aka United People’s Farm) and is located in Auburn, WA.

"What's a "Farm Incubator"?"

Through Seattle Tilth Farm Works, participants are empowered, and expected, to create market, farm and business plans to ensure their success as small farm operators. Participants who successfully complete the program will have an opportunity to rent land, equipment and utilities at subsidized rates. Graduates will also continue to receive market and distribution support, in addition to opportunities for continuing education. Somali Bantu, Ethiopian, Burundian and other low-income families have participated in the program.

At the heart of this project is the idea that participating farmers learn best by actually operating a small farm in a supportive environment. This learn-by-doing concept has already been proven successful at other nationally recognized agricultural small farm and new farmer trainings.

This program provides:

- A comprehensive educational program covering farming, business planning, operations and marketing
- On-site mentorship from experienced farmers
- Hands-on experience growing food on 1/4 acre plots
- Access to farmland, equipment, water and other necessary farming inputs
- Assistance in creating marketing channels for products

Current News

Seattle Tilth Farm Works has received major funding from USDA's Beginning Farmer Rancher Development Program!

Ownership/Management

Seattle Tilth Produce is sold to Puget Consumer's Co-op, Central Co-op and South King County restaurants and small grocery stores.

BURST for Prosperity initiated this program in 2009, passing the reins to Seattle Tilth in 2010 while continuing their valuable support.
This program is made possible by funding from Communities Putting Prevention Work (CPPW) through the Center for Disease Control & Prevention, managed locally by King County Public Health. CPPW aims to achieve broad reaching, highly impactful and sustainable change to reduce chronic disease morbidity and mortality associated with obesity and tobacco use.

The land belongs to Seattle Parks and Recreation and they are making it available as part of their Parks Urban Food Systems program.

Contact
Eddie Hill, Farm Program Manager
Can leave message at main office: (206) 633.0451 x101

Visit to Seattle Tilth
March 6th, 2012

Steve Cochenour and I (Juliette Wells) arrived in Seattle mid-morning and had the intention to visit the Seattle Tilth Farm Works (aka United People's Farm) program that afternoon. Seattle Tilth has been teaching gardeners to grow organic food in urban and suburban areas for 32 years; this farm program is a new foray into small-scale market farming. Partnering organization "Burst for Prosperity" piloted the program in 2009 and passed the reins to Seattle Tilth in 2010. Seattle Tilth is recognized as a leader in building stronger communities. The Seattle Tilth name is well established and they are already seeing demand for fresh organic produce.

The farmer training program is in its second year. The 35 acres of land is owned by Seattle Parks and Recreation.

We spent several hours with Eddie Hill, program director. Eddie gave us his undivided attention, so welcoming, invigorating, and affirming. The Farm Works program serves two functions, a curriculum that covers leadership and development, crop planning, business plans, green house planning, hoop house construction, seed starts, and financial literacy. The other function is technical assistance to beginning farmers, demonstrations in prepping and planting, harvesting, processing, distribution and marketing. Eddie talked about the inner workings of the Farm Works program and the changes they have made to the program to adjust to the population they serve with hopes of increased accountability and higher production yields this year. Issues they are trying to resolve are season retention, time management, intrapersonal skills, and team building with new farmers in the program. Seattle Tilth Farm Works serves refugees, immigrants and low-income participants from Somali Bantu, Ethiopian, Burundian and families from South King County. Eddie expressed the challenges with refugee populations who come from a very different model of business and work ethic from those who were born and raised in the United States.

After completion of the business class applicants can apply for the land at Auburn Farm. They have two options for the incubator farm program. The first is to be given a box with seeds and a production plan that they are responsible for on ¼ acre, up to 1 acre for the season. The lease includes equipment and utilities at subsidized rates. Graduates also continue to receive market and distribution support. Seattle Tilth buys the produce from them at wholesale prices and provides a stipend, averaging $150 a week. Most of the produce they grow is already accounted for through CSA and markets established by Seattle Tilth. This model works well for those who are farming for the very first time. The
potential income that comes from the produce is close to an additional $600 a month and this is a big help to families who are struggling economically and is helping these folks find their way in a new country. The impact on the farm families is having a transformational impact as their lives begin to take root and prosperity seems reachable.

The other farming opportunity is the “rent-a-plot” model. This option is primarily designed for experienced growers. They can lease up to 3 acres of land and must have a distribution plan or market to sell in submitted with their application. This option is for those who were in the program the previous year and met the production goals from the “Seed Box” and others who have demonstrated strong business skills, (this will be the first year to try this out) but Eddie seemed to think many of the participants are ready to handle bigger production goals.

All the farmers in the program are required to be at the farm a certain number of hours per day and certain number of days per week. All the farmers are required to keep up with planting, weeding, watering and harvesting. The Farm manager provides at least 40 hours a week of technical assistance. Another very unique aspect to the Farm Works program is the location and available housing on the premises. This year they are trying to do more outreach to lower income families who could participate in the Farm Works program.

Seattle Tilth Receives USDA Funding for Farm Business Training Program for Underserved Communities

Oct 25, 2011

Seattle Tilth has been awarded $483,160 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, a competitive grants program administered by USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). The funding will support Seattle Tilth Farm Works which provides training for immigrants, refugees and low-income families in farming skills and business development in South King County.

“We’re thrilled to have our work recognized nationally as an important contribution towards repairing our regional food system.” Executive Director Andrea Dwyer explained. “An investment of this magnitude will provide long-term benefits by creating viable small businesses and improving overall public health.”

Seattle Tilth Farm Works provides local refugees, immigrants, and low-income Americans the opportunity to participate in developing a sustainable food system by growing food organically and selling it to local corner stores, farmers markets and other small market buyers in their geographic or ethnic communities.
Farmers gain hands-on experience growing food on and develop small farm businesses. Access to land, equipment, and utilities is subsidized for program participants, with subsidies decreasing over time as farmers grow their businesses. Farmers also go on educational field trips to tour other farm operations, get support to sell food at local markets and events and take classes on creating a business plan as well as other farming and business topics. Somali Bantu, Ethiopian, Burundian and other low-income families have participated in the program. The program is currently accepting applications for new participants.

The USDA has awarded 36 grants totaling $18 million to organizations that will provide training and assistance to beginning farmers and ranchers to help them run successful and sustainable farms. At least 25 percent of the program's funding supports the needs of limited resource and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, as well as farm workers who want to get a start in farming and ranching. The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program was established through the 2008 Farm Bill.

Partnering organization Burst for Prosperity piloted the program in 2009 and passed the reins to Seattle Tilth in 2010. Essential support also comes from Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) through the Center for Disease Control & Prevention, managed locally by King County Public Health. The land belongs to Seattle Parks and Recreation and they are making it available as part of their Parks Urban Food Systems program.

For more information about the BFRDP program, visit: http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/bfrdp/bfrdp.html. Find out more about Seattle Tilth Farm Works: http://seattletilth.org/about/farmincubatorprogram.

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Seattle Tilth Farm Works
Application for Admission
2012 Program

The deadline for submitting this application is: December 9, 2011.

The following items are required to complete the application:

- Completed Application Form
- Two References
- Three Personal Essays
- Signed Declaration

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About Seattle Tilth Farm Works

Seattle Tilth is providing educational and farm business opportunities to underserved families in South King County through a “farm incubator” program known as Seattle Tilth Farm Works. Seattle Tilth Farm Works participants attend farm and business trainings,
tour neighboring farm operations, and gain hands-on experience growing and harvesting food using organic practices.

Through Seattle Tilth Farm Works, participants are empowered and expected to create market, farm and business plans to ensure their success as small farm operators. Participants who successfully complete the program will have an opportunity to rent land, equipment and utilities at subsidized rates. Graduates will also continue to receive market and distribution support, in addition to opportunities for continuing education.

While Seattle Tilth has been teaching gardeners to grow organic food in urban and suburban areas for 32 years, this farm program is a new foray into small-scale market farming. Partnering organization Burst for Prosperity piloted the program in 2009 and passed the reins to Seattle Tilth in 2010. Produce from the farm, under the name Seattle Tilth Produce, is sold to area restaurants, small grocery stores, corner stores and at South King County farmers markets.

Seattle Tilth Farm Works is made possible by funding from Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) through the Center for Disease Control & Prevention, managed locally by King County Public Health. CPPW aims to achieve broad reaching, highly impactful and sustainable change to reduce chronic disease morbidity and mortality associated with obesity and tobacco use.

Seattle Tilth Farm Works is also made possible by funding from the USDA’s Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP). The BFRDP provides new and aspiring farmers and ranchers access to education, information, and assets they need to be successful. The land belongs to Seattle Parks and Recreation who are making it available as part of their Parks Urban Food Systems program.

Application for Admission
Seattle Tilth Farm Works

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name: ____________________________________________

Date of Birth: ______________________________________

Current Address: ______________________________________

(Street)

(City) (State) (Zip)

Permanent Address: ______________________________________

(Street)

(City) (State) (Zip)

Phone Number(s): ______________________________________
Email Address: ________________________________

How did you hear about Seattle Tilth Farm Works? ________________________________

Do you have a driver’s license? ___ YES ___NO

If yes, license number: ________________________________

Have you had any criminal convictions (excluding minor traffic violations)? If so, please explain: ________________________________

DISABILITY or MEDICAL CONDITION

Please describe any disability or medical condition you have and indicate any adaptations or specific support/facilities you may need: ________________________________

Please describe any personal or religious considerations you would like us to know about: (this includes dietary restrictions, religious holidays and social customs)

REFERENCES

Please provide contact information for someone willing to provide a personal reference and another person willing to provide a professional reference. Referees should be able to speak specifically to your ability for self-direction and any experience you may have in the classroom, in business, or on the farm.

Personal Reference:

Name: ________________________________

Phone: (_____)_________________ Email: ________________________________

Relationship to Applicant: ________________________________

Professional Reference:

Name: ________________________________ Title: ________________________________

Phone: (_____)_________________ Email: ________________________________

PERSONAL ESSAYS
Please consider your response carefully and limit your response for each question to 400 words. Please use specific examples. If completing a paper copy, please attach separate sheets.
1. Seattle Tilth Farm Works, like running a farm itself, requires a great deal of hard work, creative problem-solving and patience. How are you prepared to succeed in this program? What personal and professional goals will this program help you achieve?

2. Do you have experience running a business? Operating a farm is full of surprises. What challenges do you anticipate encountering while running your farm business? How will you work to overcome those challenges?

3. It takes time for any business to begin making profits and it is critical that you have clear support while you are participating in the Farm Works program. If you are accepted into the Farm Works program, what kind of personal support plan do you have in place?

**EXPERIENCE**

4. Please describe your educational background including schools and training you have attended:

5. Please describe any relevant work, volunteer, or farm experience:

6. Please complete the skills assessment below. Indicate both level of experience and level of interest.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Experienced</th>
<th>Some Experience</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Interested</th>
<th>Some Interest</th>
<th>Not Interested</th>
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<tr>
<td>Planting</td>
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<td>Weed / Pest Management</td>
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<td>Harvest</td>
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<td>Produce packing</td>
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<td>Organic Practices / Certification</td>
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<td>Animal Husbandry</td>
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<td>Product/Produce Marketing/Sales</td>
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<td>Record Keeping</td>
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DECLARATION

In applying for participation in the 2012 Seattle Tilth Farm Works program, I confirm that the information I have provided in this application is accurate and complete.

I also understand that I am electing to participate in this program at my own risk. I acknowledge there are certain risks inherent in farm work, including, but not limited to, physical injury and death. I acknowledge that all risks cannot be prevented and I assume responsibility for those beyond the control of the Seattle Tilth staff. I represent that I am physically able, with or without accommodation, to participate in all aspects of this program, and, if necessary that I am able to use the equipment and/or supplies required in programmatic work.

Should I require emergency medical treatment as a result of accident or illness arising during the program, I consent to such treatment. I acknowledge that Seattle Tilth does not provide health and accident insurance for its participants and I agree to be financially responsible for any medical bills incurred as a result of emergency medical treatment.

I also understand that the Seattle Tilth Farm Works program provides support to create a farm plan or farm related business plan for 2012 and continuing education opportunities during the growing season. Unless I plan to participate in the incubator as a commercial farmer paying market rate for land and utilities, I must submit a farm plan in order to sign a lease for land on the Seattle Tilth farm.

I also understand Seattle Tilth may film, photograph and interview participants during the course of the program. I understand that all video, photographic, audio, written and other materials produced by Seattle Tilth will be the sole property of Seattle Tilth and may be made available by Seattle Tilth to third parties on its website, in its publications or through other media, as it may determine. I understand that Seattle Tilth will protect my personal information as required by applicable law.

Seattle Tilth prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

Applicant's Printed Name: ____________________________________________

Applicant's Signature: ______________________________________________

Date: ___________________________________________________________________

NEXT STEPS
Please email your completed application to micahanderson@seattletilth.org, fax it to (206) 633-0450 or mail it to Seattle Tilth Farm Works, 4649 Sunnyside Ave. N., Suite 100, Seattle, WA 98103.

Your completed application form and supporting papers will be carefully reviewed by the Seattle Tilth Farm Works admissions committee. You will be advised of the outcome, at the latest, within a few weeks after the application deadline. If you have any questions, please email: micahanderson@seattletilth.org or call (206) 633-0451 ext. 120.

Candidates who are recommended for advancement will be interviewed by Seattle Tilth Farm Works staff. If accepted, candidates will be invited to attend this year's Seattle Tilth Farm Works orientation where they will receive more in-depth program information.